

593 meetings ("posydilky" and "Vetshernytai"), and even at the
584 street meetings that are held at night ("vulytsja"); marriage is
591 seldom an affair of arrangement. After marriage, children
generally leave their parents' home; a father often provides a
home of his own for a son who wishes to marry.

586 Divorce is rare in the country. An unlucky choice of a conjugal
partner is borne with patience. Up till recently, in spite of the
836 fact that boys and girls are constantly thrown together at work
and at play, a high standard of chastity prevailed and illicit
sexual intercourse was the exception. A "pokrytka" who has been
seduced by a Russian soldier ("saldatka") or a foreigner (mostly
a Pole) has no easy lot in the country. The whole family is
deeply ashamed when the "bundling" custom ("komora") which
is still practised in some parts of the country reveals that the
183 bride is no longer a virgin. Customs have been strengthened
561 by the respect for national traditions, a deep religious feel-
ing and tolerance. Birth, baptism, marriage, death and burial
are accompanied by very many, original, symbolic customs,
dating partly from before the birth of Christ. For instance, the
old custom of duly "recognising" the newborn has been pre-
served as well as the ceremony of the baptismal banquet which
marks the reception of the newly born child into the community.

585 In the varied wedding customs which generally take the
better part of three days, there are memories of the days when
the men of the tribe kidnapped or bought their brides. A mar-
riage in a national setting has many dramatic effects and is
accompanied by a whole series of symbolical actions and cho-
ruses. They remind us of the original rôle of the family in
society. Customs from the world of the Grand Princes have
been preserved in those marriage rites as in the ritualistic
folk-songs, while the influence of the church is confined to the
● 765 actual ceremony in the church. The wake ("posyzhinja") and
the wake games, which are dying out, are echoes of ancestor-
worship and intended to prevent the dead from returning to
life. The custom of special laments for the dead ("holosinnia")
and the funeral banquet (formerly "tryzna") have persisted; on
the many days of commemoration of the dead (e. g. on the

3: Mirchuk S-4 (no date) 1949 RDI Ukraine RDI

40th day after death, at Easter, Whitsuntide, and on St. Dimi-try's day) special dishes are eaten. 765 ●

The course of the year in Ukraine is accompanied by many old customs which are not to be found among Russians but which resemble those of Southern Slavonic peoples. They spring from the world of Pontium and Greece and Rome; such are the festivals at Christmas ("koljada"), New Year ("novyj rik"), the consecration of water ("shtshedryj vetshir"), Easter ("hayivky"), the beginning of spring ("vesnyanky"), solstice ("kupallo"), the beginning of autumn ("Andrija") etc. They are accompanied by games and country dances, of which there are several thousand. The beginning of the most important agricultural operations is also celebrated (building the house, ploughing, sowing, driving the cows to pasture, hay and grain harvest etc). 796

Ukrainian demonology, founded on ancient animistic beliefs, has, in contrast to the Russian, lost all its terrors; the devil, for instance, is stripped of all horror. Magic and the belief in witchcraft are very probably of more modern, partly Christian origin. There is no higher mythology. The worship of fire and water is more developed and there are some faint traces of the worship of plants. Much of popular belief is preserved in fairy tales, fables, sagas, legends, proverbs and riddles, of which there is an inexhaustible store. Some 4 years ago Savtshenko found 2000 main variants of Ukrainian fairy tales, compared with about 1700 Russian and 1500 White Ruthenian versions. V. Hnatjuk has counted 327 fables of animals (exclusive of variants). We must finally mention the incredible wealth of popular stories and anecdotes. 538

But the Ukrainian people's most precious spiritual possession is their folk-poetry, one of the richest in Europe and characterised by aesthetic values, depth of poetic feeling and perfection of form. F. v. Bodenstedt, who published "Die poetische Ukraine" in 1843 put these Ukrainian poems above those of all other nations. Hohol said of them that they comprehended poetry and history and were a monument to the nation's ancestors. Every kind of song is represented, from the traditional songs of ritual and later ballads to the short song of to-day ("Shumky", "Kozatshky", "Kolomyjky" and "Tshabarashky"). These histo-

775 it did anything good or bad.¹² During its nightly visits to its old home it enters the room quietly, even though the doors and windows be shut, uncovers the children and rocks them, and sometimes plays practical jokes on the members of the family.¹³ It retains the power to harm, however, only for one year after the funeral, and the members of the family consequently fear it most during this period.¹⁴ Especially must it be guarded against on the night following the funeral. On this night the members of the household of the deceased must not go to sleep, but must continue their vigil as in the two preceding nights. Although some of the participants in the post-funeral dinner leave after a few hours, others remain in the house to keep the mourners company. In order to keep awake, the watchers resort to various tricks to evoke laughter and ban sleep. As soon as one dozes off, for example, another smears soot on his face, fastens a rag to his coat, or sews his coat to that of another, and the ensuing laughter causes the napping one to awake.¹⁵

The other world, it is believed, is very distant, and the journey thither takes many days. The mountaineers believe that the soul travels on horseback,¹⁶ and that the road is beset with obstacles and strewn with thorns. To reach the other world the soul must also cross a fathomless sea. If it is deserving, the Mother of God carries it over the water in a tightly woven net.¹⁷

The peasant conceives the future world in terms of the one he lives in. In heaven, people continue their daily existence much as they did on earth. They lead, to be sure, a life "where neither the burning sun, nor wind and storm disturb the perfect tranquility." But they occupy houses exactly like those found in the native villages, and they eat food which differs in no way from the regular peasant diet. Shepherds busy themselves tending cattle upon rich pastures, and tillers of the soil do their

¹² Onyścuk, *op. cit.*, xi, 48.

113 ¹³ Kolessa, J., "Narodziny i chrzciny, wesele i pogrzeb u ludu ruskiego," *Zbiór Wiadomości do Antropologii Krajowej*, xiii, (Kraków, 1889), 150.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, xiii, 150.

¹⁶ Kański, in *Globus*, lxxvii, 358.

¹⁵ Kolberg, *op. cit.*, i, 219.

¹⁷ Szuchiewicz, *op. cit.*, ii, 274.